

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE WAGE BOARD ON

Raising the Tipped Minimum Wage

November 13, 2014

My name is Liz Smith and I am the Worker Center Project Director at the (WNYCOSH) Western New York Council on Occupational Safety and Health. We are a non-profit organization in Buffalo, NY and our mission is to educate, train and advocate for and alongside workers who have faced rights violations and have faced hazardous, unsafe and exploitative conditions on the job and help workers seek justice for those violations.

The WNYCOSH Worker Center runs worker rights drop-in clinics twice a month in the city of Buffalo we and routinely see workers who are paid poverty wages and who are struggling to get by to provide for their families. Receiving a minimum wage or a sub minimum wage, like the \$5.00 an hour that tipped workers in this state receive, is certainly not enough to get by. Nationally, tipped workers are more than twice as likely to live in poverty.

Tips are not wages. In addition to a tipped minimum wage not being enough, many of these low-wage workers are employed in restaurant and hospitality sectors and are prone to the legal violation known as wage theft. It is truly disgraceful that people are working hard to make ends meet on a poverty wage and then those wages are being stolen from workers.

New York can and should do better than this. We at the Worker Center are calling on the Governor to eliminate the tipped sub-minimum wage and promote fair pay for workers.

Thank you,

Liz Smith, MPA

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